Beeches

John Middleton

£750



REF: 1100

Height: 48.5 cm (19.1")

Width: 33.5 cm (13.2")

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Framed Height: 62.5 cm (24.6")

Framed Width: 48 cm (18.9")

Description

This bright and freshly painted oil is a sketch, made predominantly on the spot and featuring beech trees in front of a reddish dry stone wall. A clear impression of a thumb or fingerprint to the lower right, and the fact the lower part of the picture adds to the sense of it being made in plein-air. Exhibition oils by Middleton tend to have darker tonality and an overall finish, whereas this work is closer in spirit to his best watercolours, which are generally brighter and looser in technique.Middleton probably made this study, where the field walls are typically made of sandstone, and where Middleton made some of his best-known work. The subject of the present work can be compared with one of Middleton's etchings of a country lane with beeches and a drystone wall, and a painting of a similar scene in the Norfolk Museums collection. The broken brush-head handling of the foliage and the beautifully rendered, twisting tree trunks are characteristic of the artist's technique, as is the way thin white branches are trailed in over foliage. Middleton quite often left white paper at the bottom of watercolours, much as he has here.The painting has been relined, probably in the early to mid-twentieth century, when it was also cut down left and right, perhaps to fit its present frame. Its dimensions are now 19 x 13.5 inches. The composition would suggest that it may have been at least an inch wider to the left, and potentially also to the right. On this basis, the work could be identified with No. 585 in the section "Sketches in Oil", in the sale of "Works of John Middleton from the Collection of Mrs. Middleton" (John Middleton's Mother) 13th, 14th and 15th June, 1883. This lot was "Beeches. 19 x 16 in". Unsigned oil sketches of this type were presumably not intended to be exhibited or sold, and are indeed rare on the market, so an assumption that it was part of Mrs. Middleton's sale would seem reasonable.

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